



Connie Rickert &lt;crickert@smcsc.com&gt;

GSA

6 messages

**Bryce Axel-Adams** <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>  
To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

Tue, Sep 7, 2021 at 4:22 PM

Mrs. Rickert,

When we last met, you asked how the administration can repair its relationship with the LGBTQ community, at the time I did not have an answer to that question, now I do. Let us promote the GSA, let us hang posters and flyers around as well as announce it during the announcements.

At last week's School Board meeting, Bill Hutton explicitly said that the decision of what can be advertised lies in the hands of the individual principals.

I have attached to this email, the flyer that I wish to put up around the school.

Please do the right thing. We're counting on you.

--

Reece Axel-Adams  
LGBTQ+ Student Advocate

**Untitled drawing.pdf**  
34K

**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>  
To: Mark Hall <mhall@smcsc.com>

Tue, Sep 7, 2021 at 4:26 PM

I am not sure what was said at the last meeting or in what context. I have been under the understanding that taking a neutral stance means no advertising for any outside organization such as GSA, Pendleton Rugby, etc.

Connie Rickert  
[Quoted text hidden]

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**Mark Hall** <mhall@smcsc.com>  
To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

Tue, Sep 7, 2021 at 5:24 PM

I did not see Reece was not at the last school board meeting. [REDACTED] asked the board if they could advertise for a GSA. Mr. Hutton deferred that question to me and I told [REDACTED] that she needed to work with her Principal regarding the club. The board is not going to get involved in the operation of a student club. The board has adopted a policy regarding this that I have attached. It appears there is a process that needs to be followed according to the policy for the group to form.

Equal access act of 1984 is what I think you are referring to. It is cited at the bottom of the board policy. It says...

Under the Federal Equal Access Act, any school that receives government funding and has at least one other non-curricular club must also allow a GSA. As the law states, "It shall be unlawful for any public secondary school which receives Federal financial assistance...to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting ...on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings."

The law also says that your school must treat all clubs the same and let them use school resources in the same way. If your school allows other clubs to meet in classrooms, put up posters and organize school events, then they have to allow a GSA to do the same.

EXHIBIT J

You have to treat a GSA or any other non-curricular student clubs the same. If you let one group hang up posters you have to let any group that wants to form do the same. If you allow a GSA to hang up posters but not permit your existing groups, then you could be discriminating against the existing groups. When we had a GSA when I was Principal we gave the group space to meet just like all other groups such as the Fellowship of Christina Athletes and the group that organized meet at the pole event. We did not give them access to the daily announcements or hang-up flyers. We reserved those things for school corporation-sponsored activities. Whatever you do it has to be done consistently for everyone.


At this very least, I am not sure they are going to have time to follow the policy regarding the formation of the club by this Thursday if that is the day they are planning on meeting.

We can talk about this more tomorrow.

Dr. Mark J. Hall  
Superintendent  
South Madison Community School Corporation

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99K

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**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>  
To: Mark Hall <mhall@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 9:13 AM

Yes, I am aware of all this content.

I meet with [REDACTED] mother tomorrow.

Connie Rickert  
[Quoted text hidden]

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**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>  
To: Bryce Axel-Adams <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 1:23 PM

I do not approve any non-PHHS announcements as we have discussed.

[Here](#) is the facility usage form. Submit the completed form to me for approval.

Connie Rickert  
[Quoted text hidden]

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**Bryce Axel-Adams** <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>  
To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 2:14 PM

I would encourage you to read this especially the bolded, numbered list, especially number 8.

I must also admit that I am extremely confused. We have seen throughout the years advertisements for the outdoor adventure club, the tux shop in town, outfitters, and even this year, Bring Change to Mind, and other clubs that I did not list. All of these being either business or noncurricular clubs. How are we different than those aforementioned clubs?

I have quoted the suggested reading at the end of this email.

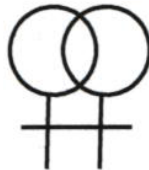
-Reece

"8. Imposing restrictions on the GSA that don't apply to other clubs: In addition to allowing GSAs to meet on school grounds, schools must provide GSAs with "equal access to available avenues of communication as provided to other non-curriculum related groups." Straights & Gays for Equal. v. Osseo Area Sch.-Dist. No. 279, 540F.3d 911, 914 (8th Cir. 2008). Examples of unequal and unlawful differential treatment include: requiring a faculty advisor for the GSA but not for other groups; placing different requirements on a GSA's posters, leaflets, and announcements than it places on other groups; or not allowing the GSA to be featured in the yearbook along with other clubs. In addition, delaying action on the GSA's application for approval, voting on the approval of a GSA when other school groups are not subject to a vote prior to approval, or in any way requiring a GSA to do more than other noncurricular clubs must to be officially recognized by the school can violate the EAA."



# **Pendleton Heights GSA**

## **A safe place for everyone**



**Callout Meeting!**

**Thursday After School until 3:30 in Mrs.  
Akers Room Room 111!  
Hope to see you there!**



PHHS, any staff, SMCSC, nor the School Board endorse the GSA and the display of these posters does not constitute an endorsement



Connie Rickert &lt;crickert@smcsc.com&gt;

**Announcement**

4 messages

**Shelby Akers** <sakers@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 10:02 AM

To: Bill Whitehair &lt;bwhitehair@smcsc.com&gt;, Connie Rickert &lt;crickert@smcsc.com&gt;, Christian Ruggles &lt;cruggles@smcsc.com&gt;

Good Morning!

If the following announcement could be played that would be awesome:

"GSA will be having their callout meeting after school on Thursday September 9th in Room 111. The meeting will last from 2:30-3:30 after school. If you have any questions, please reach out to Ms. Akers"

Have a great day!

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**Shelby Akers****Pendleton Heights High School****Art Department**[sakers@smcsc.com](mailto:sakers@smcsc.com)**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 10:58 AM

To: Shelby Akers &lt;sakers@smcsc.com&gt;

Cc: Bill Whitehair &lt;bwhitehair@smcsc.com&gt;, Christian Ruggles &lt;cruggles@smcsc.com&gt;, LANA MOORE &lt;lmoore@smcsc.com&gt;

This is not a PHHS ECA. Announcements are reserved for PHHS ECA's.  
Connie Rickert

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**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 11:00 AM

To: Shelby Akers &lt;sakers@smcsc.com&gt;

Bcc: LANA MOORE &lt;lmoore@smcsc.com&gt;, Shaun Rose &lt;srose@smcsc.com&gt;, Michael Peo &lt;mpeo@smcsc.com&gt;

This is not a PHHS ECA. Announcements are reserved for PHHS ECA's. This is also why Pendleton Rugby, FCA, and other groups such as Raymond's church group do not have announcements on the PHHS announcements even though members of his church attend PHHS. I have encouraged the GSA to use social media to advertise for their group in the same way Curt Trout advertises for his Rugby group. I have encouraged them to post on the community board at the public library as well.

I am meeting with [REDACTED]'s mom tomorrow. She was told some misinformation. She states she was told that GSA is not allowed to meet here. That is not true. I allow organizations to use our facilities and for free when an employee is willing to let them use their space, unlock the doors, clean up and lock up. The group needs to fill out a [facility usage form](#). I have not yet seen a facility usage form from GSA signed by a student. I appreciate you opening your door and giving them the facilities for free. GSA is a student-initiated organization similar to FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) and should be student-initiated with only the employee acting in a custodial capacity.

I offered Axel-Adams a facility usage form at the beginning of the year but a form was not taken, nor filled out stating no desire to lead the group. This statement was in the presence of his mother Robin. I have explained to Axel-Adams many times the neutral stance that if I allow one, I allow all. So I allow non-PHHS groups to use our facilities to meet, but I do not allow them to hang up posters or use our announcements. This is not discriminatory. This is consistent.

I encouraged multiple identified GSA at the end of last year to select officers and keep the momentum going so GSA could hit the ground running this year. GSA has been around here since I started 14 years ago, but the student leaders let it dwindle out or it just dwindles out with no responsible leaders to have sustainability in my opinion. Please encourage the leaders selected this year to make every effort at the end of this year to have leaders in place for the 22-23 school year so that the GSA community does not constantly feel they have to start from scratch. I do not like that they do not feel valued as some have expressed. Everyone has value.

I tell you this so you are aware of events and maybe in some custodial role, can encourage student leaders to keep this going from year to year so the support for the GSA has longevity not just in times of controversy.

See board policy to be clear on who can come to meetings and the "custodial capacity".

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm#inbox/FMfcgzGlijrGwfsZrXqwsRhJDfMzst?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

Connie Rickert

On Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 10:02 AM Shelby Akers <sakers@smcsc.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

**Shaun Rose** <srose@smcsc.com>  
To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 11:23 AM

The link is dead. It goes nowhere.

[Quoted text hidden]

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Shaun A. Rose  
Assistant Principal  
Pendleton Heights High School  
One [Arabian Drive](#)  
[Pendleton, IN 46064](#)  
(765)778-2161 ext 6002



Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

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**GSA**

1 message

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**Bryce Axel-Adams** <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>  
To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 15, 2021 at 11:17 AM

Can you explain to me exactly why the GSA cannot become an official school club?  
As well as exactly why we cannot promote.

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Reece Axel-Adams  
LGBTQ+ Student Advocate



Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>

## GSA-Urgent

2 messages

**Bryce Axel-Adams** <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>

Wed, Sep 15, 2021 at 1:04 PM

To: Connie Rickert <crickert@smcsc.com>, srose@smcsc.com, Michael Peo <mpeo@smcsc.com>

Cc: mhall@smcsc.com

Mrs. Rickert,

I fully realize that at this point in time, we do not like each other. However, personal feelings should not dictate how one executes their job. One of your roles as principal of this school is to "implement the Board's policies and administrative rules and regulations."

With that being said, I would like to officially ask that the GSA be made a school-sponsored club.

In the event that you were to deny my request, I would like to know exactly why you will not allow the GSA an official school club.

I would also like for you to take a look at school board policy 2430 and policy 5751. I have quoted the sections that I believe to be of the most importance.

PO-5730: "A student-initiated group granted permission to meet on school premises shall be provided the same rights and access and shall be subject to the same administrative guidelines that govern the meetings of student organizations sponsored by this Board, except as provided by this policy."

PO-2430: "Students shall be fully informed of the curricular-related and extra-curricular activities available to them."

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Reece Axel-Adams

LGBTQ+ Student Advocate

**Connie Rickert** <crickert@smcsc.com>

Thu, Sep 16, 2021 at 2:17 PM

To: Bryce Axel-Adams <bryceaxeladams@stu.smcsc.com>

Cc: Shaun Rose <srose@smcsc.com>, Michael Peo <mpeo@smcsc.com>, Mark Hall <mhall@smcsc.com>, raxeladams@comcast.net

Bcc: Samson Hunckler <shunckler@smcsc.com>

Last we spoke you stated you would not speak to me without your mom present. Are both of you available to meet sometime next week?

I have the following times available next week:

Tuesday after 10 AM

Any time Wednesday & Thursday between 7 AM-3:20 PM

Thanks,

Connie Rickert

[Quoted text hidden]